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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: CDA CALLS ON NEW DEFMIN

REF: YEREVAN 504

Classified By: CDA A. F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Charge d'affaires and DATT paid a courtesy visit to new Defense Minister Mikayel Harutyunian on May 4, the first such visit since the former chief of staff had assumed the post (reftel). The DefMin expressed his dissatisfaction with the new Human Rights Report language on Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), predicted clean elections, discussed the civilianization of the Ministry of Defense according to the new reforms, and repeated his predecessor's itinerant pitch for communications equipment to outfit the entire Armenian army, rather than just for the peacekeeping battalion. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Following up on an earlier conversation with Harutyunian regarding the changes to the HRR, CDA emphasized that U.S. policy on NK remains unchanged. Harutyunian repeated concerns we had heard from other sectors of the government: that the new HRR language could embolden Azerbaijan and change the course of the negotiations. Harutyunian neatly segued into familiar MOD gripes regarding parity of military assistance given to Armenia and Azerbaijan. CDA countered that assistance also depends on how much a partner contributes to international efforts, but also stressed that we were pleased with Armenia's support. Harutyunian also reiterated a complaint already expressed by his predecessor and other MoD officials -- the fact that Azerbaijan has declared numbers of main battle tanks and artillery pieces that exceed the nation's Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty ceilings for those categories. Harutyunian went on to add that Armenian officials are know that Azerbaijan's holdings in these categories are actually much higher than even the declared quantities.

¶3. (C) Harutyunian noted that he thought the elections would be "not bad." He said he personally would see that any member of the MOD's staff caught pressuring soldiers' votes would be kicked out of the ministry.

¶4. (C) Commenting on the MOD reforms, Harutyunian noted that, though a law to civilianize MOD leadership was already in the National Assembly, the process would take about two years. He said civilians would have to undergo defense training, to avoid a superficial civilianization whereby officers were simply stripped of their uniforms. He also noted that the MOD was working on its draft National Military Strategy, and would be seeking USG assistance as it did while preparing its

National Security Strategy.

¶5. (C) The easy stuff out of the way, Harutyunian launched into the MOD's perennial plea to use its Foreign Military Fund (FMF) money to outfit the entire army with communications equipment, rather than just the peacekeeping battalion, as is now the case. He noted that the Armenians (unlike the Azeris) were not stockpiling tanks and munitions, and that Armenia's capacity to cooperate with European troops in the future would be hampered by compatibility issues. CDA repeated that our military assistance goes to the units that assist in international peacekeeping efforts.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Although an old campaigner, Harutyunian seemed ill at ease in his new role. It is not clear how long he will keep this job. If PM Sargsian's Republican party wins a clear majority in the elections, Harutyunian will likely be asked to step aside in favor of newly-appointed Chief of Staff Seyran Ohanian, who was until recently the "Defense Minister" of the "N-K Republic."
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